1: Rosen E-5 (1901-1902) 1924 SK6 Choroti SK6

CHAPTER VI.

The Choroti (6). Family Life and Social Organization. Superstition. Illness and Death.

Marriage customs. Division of labour. Chiefs. Medicine men. Belief in evil spirits. Magic means of protection. Illness. Exorcism. Fairy darts. Physical therapeutics. Death. Burial. Belief in a future existence.

A Choroti man, as a rule, has only one wife, but among the part of 595
the tribe that has been in close intercourse with the Chiriguano, it is not an uncommon thing for the chiefs to possess several wives, as, for instance, the chief of the Choroti Indians living in the neighbourhood of Tatarenda (close on the border of the Chiriguano country), who had no less than three spouses. In fig. 178 is seen this chief holding one of his sons by the hand; to the left of the boy there is the chief's »number-one» wife, grown old and ugly, and on the man's right is his second wife, the mother of the boy. His third wife, who is not included in the picture, was quite a young girl.

Among the Choroti it is the women who take the initiative in amor- 832
ous relations. As a rule, this is done at dances which take place in seasons when food is abundant, and the Indians accordingly find it fitting to dance and amuse themselves. In his book »Indianliv», Nordenskiöld has given a very vivid description of such nocturnal mating dances, and in the preceding chapter I have (pp. 149, 150) quoted from him.

When a girl has reached mature age, she enters into free and un- 836
restricted relations with now one, now another, of the men, but finally she finds for herself a partner for life (see fig. 179). Having once taken this step, she usually keeps faithful to her husband. If a Choroti girl should happen to become pregnant, she sets about procuring abortion, and in [847]
that way she as a rule avoids having any children before becoming a

wife. [p. 159]

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Fig. 179. A girl, and the lover she has chosen for herself. Choroti. Gran Chaco, Bolivia. Photo. E. v. R.

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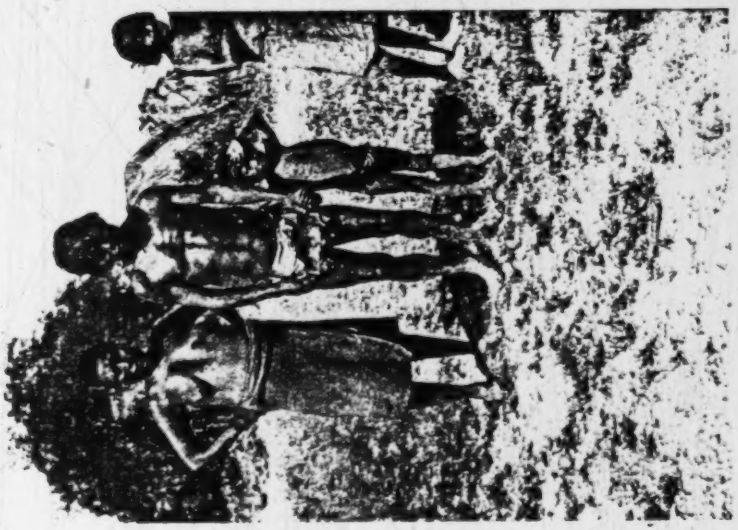

Fig. 178. A chief, with his son and two of his three wives. Choroti. Gran Chaco, Bolivia. Photo. E. v. R.

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2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)!932 SI7 Mataco SI7

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CHAPTER IV.

Courtship and marriage.

A salient feature in the social life of all Chaco tribes, and one in which they differ considerably from the tribes whom I learned to know in tropical South America, is the great sexual liberty allowed to young people before marriage. As soon as a girl has passed her first menstruation she is considered free to choose for herself occasional lovers, and generally she does not delay in making use of this right. This free sexual life is particularly indulged in during the algaroba season, in connection with the feasts and dances which then take place. The girls avoid the natural consequences of this sexual license by abortion or infanticide, customs which are also approved by the social morality of the Chaco Indians. Having enjoyed this free life for some years, the girl ultimately decides to marry, and then as a rule becomes a faithful wife as long as the husband does not himself neglect his duties towards her. This general state of things is met with all along the Pilcomayo, although customs of course differ to some extent in different tribes. I shall first relate the customs practised among the Choroti in courtship and marriage.

The *Choroti* are a strictly monogamous people. During my stay among the different Choroti tribes I never found a single case of polygamy, and I was moreover able to confirm that polygamy is strongly disapproved of by custom and the social morality of the people. It is first of all rendered impossible by the jealousy of the women who, as I have mentioned before, have a decisive influence in matters of love and take the first step towards contracting marriage.

Courtship therefore among the Choroti assumes rather a peculiar form, inasmuch as the girls play the active, and the young men the passive part. Marriages are as a rule contracted during the algaroba season from November to March, when there is a good supply of food in the villages and